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The Norwegian Farmers

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By

T. A. HOVERSTAD

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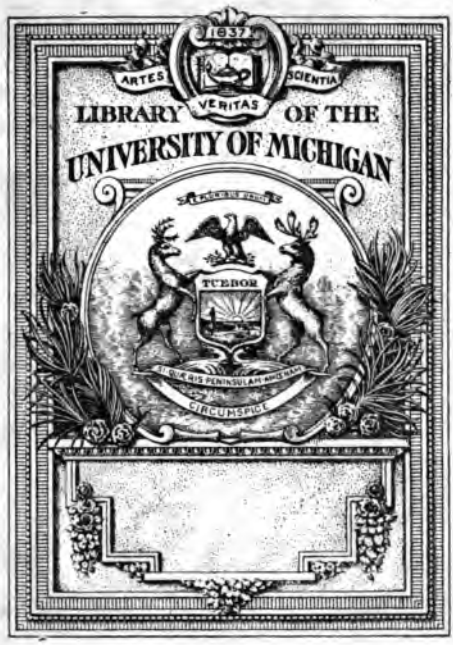
FARGO, N. DAK.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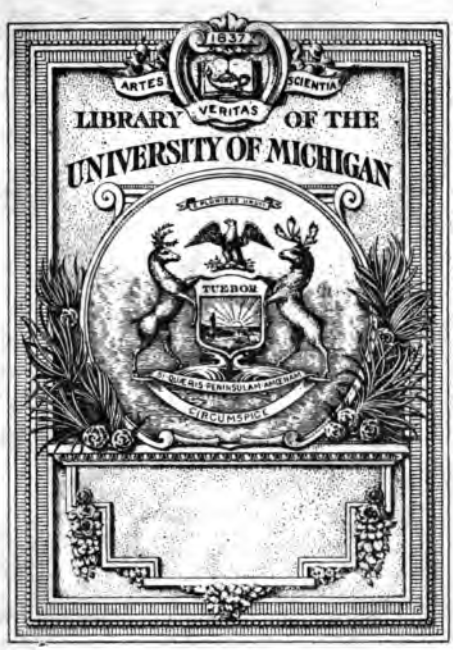
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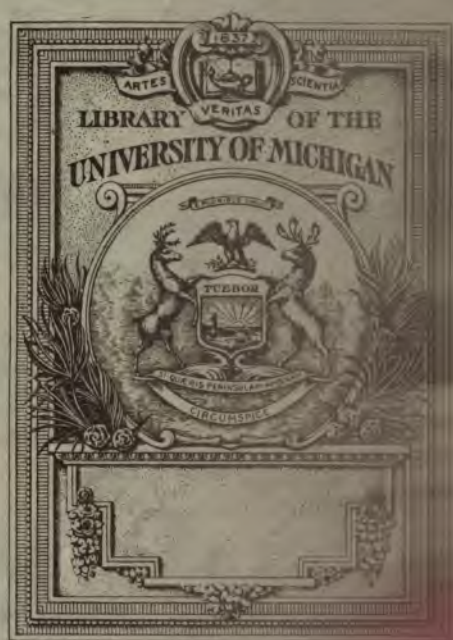
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T. A. HOVERSTAD
Author of the Article
Agricultural Commissioner of Soo Line

Mr. Hoverstad was the first student to enter the Minnesota School of Agriculture and the first graduate of the Minnesota College of Agriculture.

In 1906, he with Prof. J. J. Shaw, judged the 100 farms in the J. J .Hill contest in Minnesota, North and South Dakota.

From 1906 he was superintendent of the Farmers Institutes in North Dakota. The Dakota Farmer makes the following statement: "Superintendent T. A. Hoverstad of the North Dakota Farmers Institute has so long been connected with this and experimentation work in the northwest that bis name is perhaps sooner a household word in agricultural than that of any other single man similarly employed."

The Norwegian Farmers

in

The United States

BY T. A. HOVERSTAD

ILLUSTRATED

HANS JERVELL PUBLISHING CO.
Fargo, North Dakota.

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FROM AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE, FARGO, N. D.

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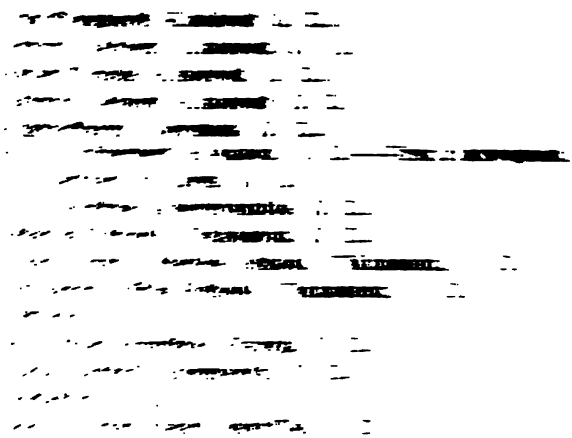


FINGAL ENGERS FARM, HATTON, N. D.

The Norwegian Farmers in The United States

In 1910 there were in the United States 155,570 farmers, born in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Of these 59,742 were born in Norway, and more than ninety-nine per cent now live in the North Central States. Seventy per cent lives in the states of Minnesota, Wisconsin and North Dakota. Their distribution in the three States are as follows: Minnesota 19,206, Wisconsin 11,485, and North Dakota 10,886. The only other states having more than 1000 foreign born Norwegian farmers are South Dakota, with 5, 381, Iowa with 4, 614 and Washington 2,038. Montana doubtless has more than 1000 Norwegian born farmers now, as the influx has been very great the last three years. There were 854 Norwegian born farmers in Montana

[redacted]

EINAR HOELS FIRST HOUSE

in 1910. Illinois, Michigan, Nebraska, Kansas, Texas, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Oregon and California have also quite a large number. The Canadian provinces have had a very large immigration from Norway, the last few years. It will be noted that these emigrants located almost wholly in the northern states having a climate resembling that of Norway. It is of interest to learn that Norway has given to the United States more farmers than any other European country except Germany and Sweden. The four European countries contributing the largest number of farmers are as follows:

Germany	221,800	or 33.13	per cent
Sweden	67,453	or 10.07	per cent
Norway	59,742	or 8.92	per cent
England	39,728	or 5.93	per cent

EINAR HOELS FIRST HOUSE

The Norwegian Farmers in North Dakota.

The total population in North Dakota is 577,056. Of these 156,157 or 27 per cent. are foreign born. These are quite evenly distributed over the state. In six counties, out of forty-nine, more than 50 per cent. are foreign born, and in twenty-nine, more than 25 per cent. By far the largest number of foreign born farmers in North Dakota come from Norway. The countries contributing the largest number of farmers to the state are as follows:

Norway	29.4
Russia	20.4
Germany	10.6
Sweden	7.8
Denmark	3.4

If we add together the number of foreign born and also the descendants having one or both parents of foreign birth we have the following percentages:

Norway	30.3 per cent.
Russia	15.3 per cent.
Germany	14.7 per cent.
Sweden	6.6 per cent.
Denmark	3.10 per cent.

The rate of increase in population in North Dakota the past ten years is very large. Statistics show this increase to be about 80 per cent. This is almost four times the rate of increase of the United States. In spite of this great growth of population the state is yet only one person to every 87 acres of land in the state. The Norwegians went into the country districts to becomes farmers. Many were at first farm laborers and became farmers later. The number that went on to farms is very much larger than those that located in the cities.

P. O. BORDERUDS FIRST HOUSE, NORMAN, N. D.

The Descendents of the Norwegian Emigrants.

There are no available figures at hand from the census of 1910 to show the relatiave percentage of the second generation of Norwegians that live on the farms. The census of 1900 shows that 63 percent of the second generation live in rural communities. This is an increase of more than 13 per cent. over the first generation. From the data at hand it is hard to give satisfactory explanation of these figures. They indicate, however, that there is not among the young people an increasing tendency to move from the country to the city. There is a larger percentage of farmers in the second generation, that is, the children of Norwegian emigrants, than that of the second generation of any other nationality. The percentages for each nationality are as follows:

Norwegians	54.3 per cent.
Danes	44.0 per cent.
Swiss	39.3 per cent.
Bohemians	35.4 per cent.
Swedes	32.6 per cent.
Germans	28.0 per cent.
Canadian (English)	26.2 per cent.
French	24.6 per cent.
English and Welsh	22.3 per cent.
Scotch	21.1 per cent.
Canadian (French)	16.7 per cent.
Irish	15.3 per cent.
Poles	12.2 per cent.
Russians	11.5 per cent.
Austrians	9.6 per cent.
Italians	6.2 per cent.
Hungarians	3.5 per cent.

The Norwegians came first to southern Wisconsin and Northern Illinois. As the lands settled westward the immigrants followed the moving frontier into Iowa and Minnesota, North and South Dakota and they are now moving into

M. HABBERSTADS FIRST HOUSE, KINDRED, N. D.

Montana, the coast states, and Western Canada. The tendency at present is to settle in the newer sections of North Dakota, Northern Minnesota and Northern Wisconsin. The sons of the Norwegian emigrants, as a rule, remained on the fathers farm, got a farm in the neighborhood or moved to get a farm on the new land on the frontier. It shows that the love of country life did not disappear with the first generation.

Experiences of the Norwegian Pioneer in America.

The early pioneers who came to America had to endure many unpleasant experiences. They had to go through all the experiences of pioneer life. In the developmnt of any new country there are five stages the pioneers have to go through. The Norwegians have go through all these five stages in the

M. HABBERSTADS FARM, KINDRED, N. D.

same game like the savages did. The change of the country in the two stages was that the white hunter took the place of the savage hunter, the food remaining the same.

The third stage is the "ranching stage." Here the inhabitant remains the same as in the hunting stage but the food changes. As the buffalo, antelope and other game decreased the rancher brought in the domestic cattle, sheep and horses to occupy the country where the game had disappeared. North Dakota and Montana were famous ranch territories. The short buffalo grass cured on the plains. It could be grazed winter and summer. It was very nutritious. The ranch cattle were sent to the market in the best market condition even if there had never been a pound of grain given them or having been housed a day. Great fortunes were made in ranching. This stage is disappearing. Only a few ranches now remain on the plains. The

Norwegians had their share in the ranching stage of the western frontier.

The fourth stage is the "bonanza farming stage." The ranching stage can continue only when the land area is very large and the population sparse. As population becomes more dense the rancher must give place to the farmer. The land must be made to produce more than the native grass does, and there must also be a variety in the products. The bonanza farming stage differs from the ranching stage preceding in this, that the native grass and the stock disappear, and in its place develops great fields of grain. The land is plowed in large fields, big machinery is used, and everything is done on a large scale. Only one, or very few crops are raised. This stage is somewhat brief. It is an exploiting system of farming. The bonanza farmer tries to get everything possible out of the land at the very least expense. Some Norwegians were very prominent bonan-

za farmers and many of the emigrants were employed as laborers on such large farms. This stage of farming has largely disappeared from the United States.

The fifth and last stage is that of the "small farm," where the area is usually limited to the amount that a farmer and his family can work without much extra help. Besides growing grain the farmer grows a variety of crops so there is a succession of production through the season. He also stocks his farm with all the necessary domestic animals. Permanent homes are built and the elements of permanency and stability appear. Churches and schools are developed, road and bridges constructed. Cities and towns begin to dot the country. Railroading and manufacturing develop. A permanent civilization is established. It is in this last stage of the five that the Norwegian emigrants took most active part. There was enough blood left in the early em.

JOHN BAKKENS FARM, MILTON, N. D.

joy the hunting stage among the savage tribes, but the great bulk preferred the quiet self-supporting, independent home on the land in the neighborhood where there could be companionship and co-operation in work, worship, and life.

The Departments of Farming.

Farming is a complex organization of interlocking enterprises. A careful analysis will show that farming may be divided into several departments. The farmers' activities can be put into several groups. The farmer must be a business man. Buying and selling are constant activities. He must be a mechanic. It is only primitive man that works the land without tools or machinery. He must be a student of the phenomena of plant and animal life. The man who does not understand the fundamental laws of biology can not succeed in farming. He must be a skilled laborer. To

JOHN BAKKENS FARM, MILTON, N. D.

farm by "main strength and awkwardness" is a thing of the past. He must be an executive and know how to organize his work to the best advantage. Any farm operator who fails in any of the above activities is lowering his chances for success. How the Norwegians have succeeded or failed, their own records show.

The Norwegian Farmers as Business Men.

The farmer has to transact business constantly. If he can not obtain a homestead he must buy and pay for his land. He must purchase material for building and fences. His bills for machinery every year amounts to a great deal. He must pay for labor and the commodities he needs for his farm and family. He must sell the surplus commodities he produces on the farm. If he has any cash,

after the years business is done, he must invest it in interest bearing securities. It will be seen that the amount of business each farmer transacts in a year, while not so very great, is still enough to require some business talent.

How have the Norwegians transacted their farm business? Most of them came from the mother country rather poor in money. What they did have, they earned by hard labor. They therefore had learned the value of the dollar. They had learned how to save their earnings. Economy had become a habit with the large majority. When farming commenced every dollar saved was needed. Borrowing money was avoided as much as possible. Paying interest was done only when very necessary. The mortgage was paid off as soon as possible. As a result of this spirit of care and economy, 3477 farms belonging to Norwegians of first generations in North Dakota were free from mortgages in 1910, and

KRISTEN K. RENSLA, TOWNER, N. D.

a large number of the remainder had only small indebtedness. Out of the total of 10,886 Norwegian farm operators in North Dakota, 9,562 own their lands. When we consider how few years most of the settlers have been in North Dakota, this record is very excellent. Comparatively few Norwegians borrow money to speculate with. Many borrow money to buy land to hold until the children grow up so they can have homes of their own.

In planning their farm operations the first consideration was to raise the crops that would bring the highest renumeration. In planning buildings, fences, and other structures the thing that could be used to bring revenue was the first considered. Any expensive ornamental dwelling house was not erected until the necessary things were provided. In short, utility and remuneration stood out prominent in planning their farm business.

Exceptions from this principle is

more common now than formerly. The opportunities for profits in speculative enterprises have made many less cautious of non-interest bearing securities and low, many look more to profit from wisely or cleverly handled capital.

Norwegian Farmers as Mechanics.

A farmer must, to a certain extent, be a mechanic. He has to build fences and bridges, and repair machinery and buildings. He uses machinery in nearly all enterprises on his farm involving labor. Carpenter and blacksmith tools are invaluable on the farm. The village blacksmith is not as common now as they used to be. Time, is also beginning to be such a great factor that even though the blacksmith's bill would not be very great, the time spent in going to and from the shop is becoming an important item. Each farmer has either a farm shop or some place where he can do a great deal

S. H. NELSONS FIRST HOUSE, COOPERSTOWN, N. D.

of his repair work. The Norwegians have always been skilled in handicraft. His income in the mother country was so low he could not purchase factory made goods. For generations past the peasant had to work in wood, iron, and stone until skill has become a national trait. The skill in the use of machinery and tools has been to him a great asset. Technical training in shop work is now given in our schools and greater skill is expected to develop.

The Norwegian Farmer and Natural Science.

The farmer has to do with soils, crop, animals, climate, water, etc. The success of the farmer is, in a measure, determined by the application of natural science to the material with which he deals. No farmer can comprehend fully all there is to any one department of farm life, let alone understanding them

all, but he can and must understand enough of each so he can operate each department of his farm intelligently.

The Norwegian farmers have studied the different departments of his work carefully. The working of the soil and the development of the various farm crops have been given careful consideration. The relation of climate to crops,—the relation of crops to the soil,—the relation of crops to market, etc., have all been considered in planning the farm.

The Norwegians are good dairymen. The Norwegians in the old country have always had dairy herds. Thy have taken intelligent hold of this industry in their adopted country. No class of farming is more sure of future success than dairying intelligently conducted. When one considers the influence dairying has had in developing the Northwest, and what proportion the Norwegians have contri-

S. H. NELSONS FARM, COOPERSTOWN, N. D.

buted, we can begin to appreciate their influence. The Norwegians have studied dairying more than any other live stock industry. The growing of farm crops have been given deep study. To succeed with an enterprise like crop growing, whose success depends almost wholly to agencies outside ones control, can not be done without strenuous thought and intelligent planning.

The Norwegians as Laborers.

The farmer who is to be a success must, in nine cases out of ten, be a laborer. To operate a farm with hired labor entirely has been, and doubtless will continue to be, very difficult. Farming is a family enterprise. The size of land that the family can take care of without hired help is most sure to bring success. The Norwegians have always been very industrious. In Norway farm land is often poor owing to the mountainous char-

acter of the country. Cautiousness in employing help was necessary. Big labor bills could not be paid. Each farmer had to work. This established the habit of industry. This has become inherent in the very fibre of the race. The farmer who has the skill and the willingness to work has a great asset.

Norway is located in the far north. The winters are cold. The summers are not very warm. A part of the population live by fishing. Hard work, outdoor life, and simple home grown food, together with a quiet temperate life, has given them a strong constitution. This constitution and willingness to work has made them great laborers. In industrial pursuits they are much sought after by employers.

Another factor in giving them industrious habit is the mode of rearing the children. The early education was largely provided by the parents. The companionship of the son with the father

T. T. VIGESAA, COOPERSTOWN, N. D.

and the daughter with her mother has given the young growing children an opportunity of mutual service and co-operation. This gave the children habits of industry from early life. The boy likes to do a man's job. A girl likes to do a woman's work.

Another factor that has made the Norwegians industrious is their religious training. Not only did they have religious services in the homes, but religion was taught as a regular study in the schools. Industry is one of the virtues that is always held in high esteem by the church. During the last thirty years of the past century, there was not much profit in farming, if the increase in land values are eliminated. The use of labor saving machinery had not been so much introduced. Those farmers who depended on hired help worked at a disadvantage. Those races that had the habit of work were truly fortunate. The large percentages of success of the Norweg-

ians are in great measure, due to their habits of industry.

The Character of the Norwegian Farmers.

The Norwegian farmers have been honest. They have preferred to "earn" their living rather than to "make" their living. To get a living from the sweat of the brow of other people has not appealed to them. There are dishonest people among the Norwegians. But as a class they rank well in business honesty.

They have paid their mortgage obligations promptly. They have not tried to live beyond their means, thereby tax their resources for unnecessaries. The one virtue more to be appreciated more than any other is the honesty of the people. It is hoped that the habits of industry will continue to be a trait to be preserved in the Norwegian character. The Norwegians who came to America,

R. C. AASEN, ANETA, N. D.

came to improve their condition and to remain loyal, law abiding citizens in their adopted country. They were country people in the old country. They moved onto farms in this land. They intended to make homes for themselves and their children on their farm. When they filed on homesteads it was a bona-fide intention of making them their homes. They did not plan to get the land and hold it until deeded, and then sell out. Neither do they move to the cities when they become so financed that they can do so. The farm was the place intended for the permanent abode and not a stepping stone to something else. The emigrants came to stay on the land. Their children remain on their lands after them. It is a very common experience for the father to deed his land to his son. The second generation remains on the farms and make just as much success in farming as their fathers did. The sons and daughters of the Norwegian emigrants frequent the

agricultural schools and colleges. They make good records. They are very often among the honor students. They are as a class highly respected. They go into agricultural pursuits rather than business and the professions.

The Norwegian emigrants that came to the Northwest have made a splendid record. Norway can be proud of "Det Udvandrede Norge." In North Dakota alone they operate between four and five million acres of land valued at about $150,000,000.00 and the value of buildings, machinery, stock, etc., will be worth fully the same amount, making the value of the property so operated by the Norwegians in North Dakota worth at least $300,000,000.00. They contribute liberally to the support of churches and schools, to charity and benevolences, to the state and the government. The best we can say about a man is he is a good citizen. This can be said about the Norwegian-American farmer.

W. S. CHRISTENSEN, ANETA, N. D.

The Norwegians become good Americans but they do not forget their mother country. The Norwegian institutions have been transplanted onto the American soil. The history and traditions are being preserved. Norwegian culture and art will be preserved in this country. There rests now one obligation for the Norwegian-Americans and that is to determine what they can do for the country of their forefathers. Norway gave to America her sons and daughters, the most valuable and precious gift she could give. The Exposition of 1914 will familiarize the "Udvandrede Norge" with old Norway. There will develop a consciousness that there should be reciprocal services between the two countries. Talent, money, and services can be directed to help to devlop the resources of the old country for mutual benefit of Norwegians in Norway and their decendents in their adopted land.

HALVOR BOE, EDMORE, N. D.

A Native Assembly.

HALVOR BOE, EDMORE, N. D.

JOHN STEFFENSEN, REEDER, N. D.

NICOLAI BERG, HATTON, N. D

HIGH SCHOOL, HATTON, N. D.

SAM AANDAHL, LITCHVILLE, N. D.

T. J. GUDMESTAD, LITCHVILLE, N. D.

ANDREW STAVENS, HATTON, N. D.

C. T. STUDNESS, CHURCHES FERRY, N. D.

OLD PEOPLES HOME, NORTHWOOD, N. D.

E. G. HENDERSON, AGENT AT H

O. T. ANDREWS, MAYVILLE, N. D.

MRS. HANS JOHNSON, MAYVILLE, N. D.

OLD PEOPLE'S HOME, NORTHAMPTON, N. H.

O. T. ANDREWS, MAYVILLE, N. D.

MRS. HANS JOHNSON, MAYVILLE, N. D.

SENATOR A. J. GRØNNA,
LAKOTA, N. D.

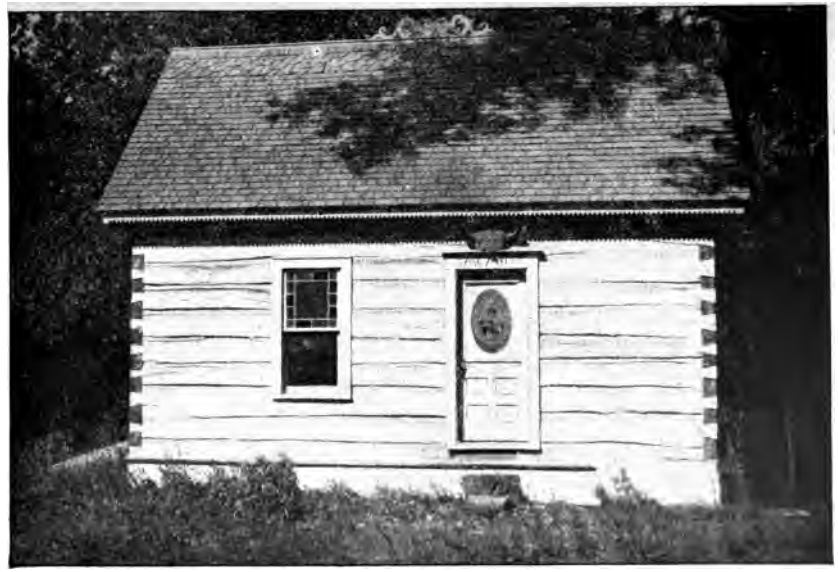
SENATOR A. J. GRØNNA,
LAKOTA, N. D.

M. SOLIAH, HATTON, N. D.

IVAR THOMPSON, HATTON, N. D.

KNUT O. NESTEGAARD, RAMSEY, N. D.

HANS. J. GRUSTAD, TUNBRIDGE, N. D.



ØSTEN PLADSEN, HATTON, N. D.—House Built of Trees He Himself Had Planted.

GUNDER STAVENS HATTON, N. D.

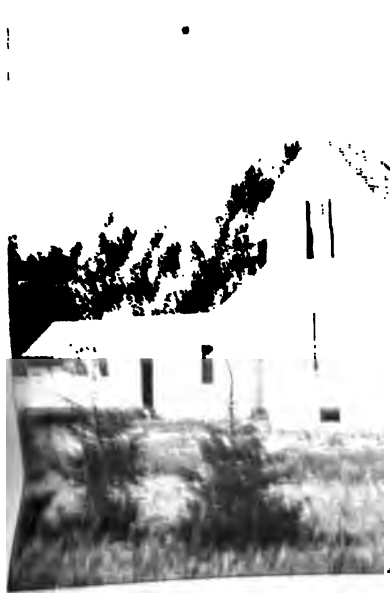
G. C. BJONE, LITCHVILLE, N. D.

J. K. SVEE, DEVILS LAKE, N. D.

SENATOR M. N. JOHNSON,
PETERSBURG, N. D.

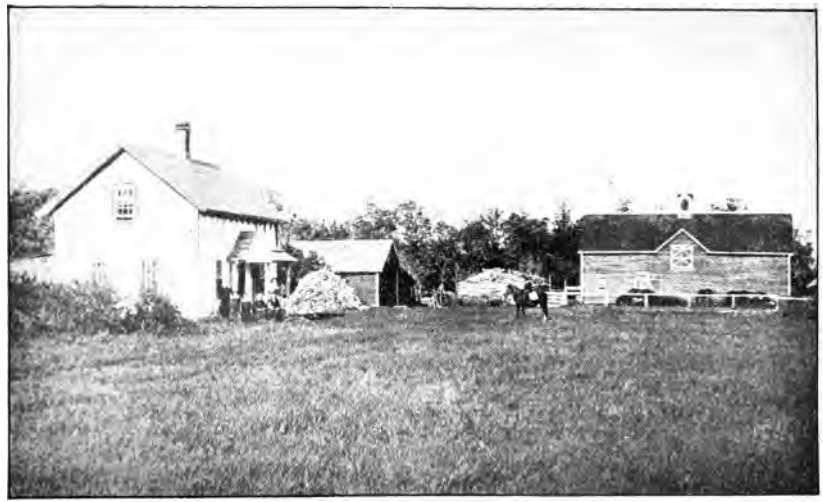
U. N. UNDER SECRETARY GENERAL

HON. J. L. HJORTH, REEDER, N. D.



SVEN ULSAKER, KINDRED, N. D.

CHRIST MOCKED, RISEN, N. D.



B. C. ANDERSON, HICKSON, N. D.—First Norwegian Settler on Farm in North Dakota.

PETER TRANA, KINDRED, N. D.

OLE GILBERTSON, TOWNER, N. D.

PETER TRANA, KINDRED, N. D.

PETER TRANA, KINDRED, N. D.

OLE GILBERTSON, TOWNER, N. D.

HENRY LEE, GRAFTON, N. D.

L. J. GLOMSETH, BOTTINEAU, N. D.

VIEW FROM FORT RANSOM, N. D.

ANTON DAHLEN, KINDRED, N. D.

STATE CAPITOL, BISMARCK, N. D.

RUSTADFARM, NORMAN, N. D.

STATE CAPITOL, BISMARCK, N. D.

RUSTADFARM, NORMAN, N. D.

INDIANS.

ENDERLIN, N. D.

HALVOR NELSON, KINDRED, N. D.

G. GUNDERSON, MOHALL, N. D.

JENS SØRBY, FORT RANSOM, N. D.

NILS OLSGAARD, KINDRED, N. D.

JENS SØRBY, FORT RANSOM, N. D.

NILS OLSON AND KINDRED, N. D.

E. J. STAFNE, ABERCROMBIE, N. D.

[illegible] [illegible] N. D.

HALVOR NELSON, KINDRED, N. D.

HALVOR NELSON, KINDRED, N. D.

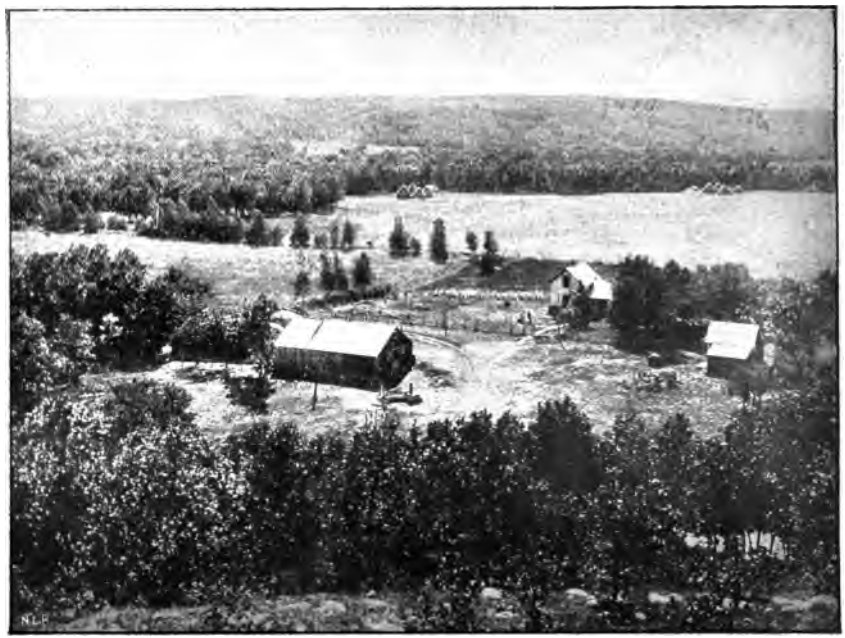
G. GUNDERSON, MOHALL, N. D.

JENS SØRBY, FORT RANSOM, N. D.

NILS OLSGAARD, KINDRED, N. D.

E. J. STAFNE, ABERCROMBIE, N. D.

MATH. GULLICKSEN, CANDO, N. D.



JOHN HENDRICKSON, FORT RANSOM, N. D.

GOOSE RIVER, NEAR MAYVILLE, N. D.

ST. LUKES HOSPITAL, FARGO, N. D.